

Vijaya Dashami (विजयादशमी)

By Acharya Bramdeo

Vijaya Dashami (Dashera, दशेरा) celebrates the victory (*vijay*) of Shri Rama over Ravan. It is tradition to mark the triumph of good over evil by burning effigies of Ravan, on the tenth day (*Dashami*) of waxing phase of the moon (*shukla paksha*) of the month of *Ashvin* (lunar calendar).

Dashera in spiritual terms is “*Dasa-haaraa*, (दस+हारा), vanquishing (*haaraa-हारा*) the ten (*dasa-दस*) demons in our heads: (1) *Avidyaa* (अविद्या) – ignorance, false knowledge, absence of true spiritual knowledge; (2) *Asmitaa* (अस्मिता) - belief that our existence is limited to the body - ignoring the soul; (3) *Raaga* (राग) - inordinate attachment to things; (4) *Dvesha* (द्वेष) –hatred; (5) *Abhinivesha* (अभिनिवेश) - belief that we shall live forever; (6) *Kaama* (काम), *Mada* (मद) – overindulgence in sensual gratification; (7) *Krodha* (क्रोध) –anger; (8) *Lobha* (लोभ) –greed; (9) *Moha* (मोह) - obsession, infatuation, all attention or interest focused on near and dear ones; and (10) *Ahankaara* (अहंकार) - ego, self-centredness.

We will really celebrate Dashera (*Das-hara*) only when we shall overpower these tendemons. The formula to the antidote to the ten-faced demon or Ravan within us consists of (i) the acquisition and effective use of both worldly and spiritual knowledge (*paraa- परा & aparaa vidyaa* अपराविद्या), coupled with (ii) a holistic approach to fasting which includes purity of food and drinks (सात्त्विक आहार), thoughts (सात्त्विक विचार), and behavior (सात्त्विक व्यवहार).

Our conscience and clear vision is Ram; the bow is our mind; and the arrows are our thoughts. The 8-fold process of the Yog philosophy (*Ashtanga Yog*) empowers us to discipline the mind our mind and engage in righteous thoughts, words and deeds and unfold the splendor of the real self.

Besides the festivity which marks the victory of good over evil and promotes social bonding, Dashera is time to put up all our physical and mental efforts to internalize the goodness and shun evil and experience the thrilling feeling of the union of the soul (*aatmaa*) with the Divinity, Supreme Soul (*Paramaatmaa*).

May the almighty *Eeshvar* (God) grant us the strength to defeat the ten-faced Ravan within us, thus celebrate the real Dashera and Vijaya Dashami!

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